

# BAGS OF **WELCOME**

Be ready to  
welcome all into  
your worship space  
– ideas for creating  
**WELCOME** bags



Help children and others engage with your service  
and know they belong and are valued

## Why WELCOME bags?

God welcomes all – this is fundamental to our faith. The story of Jesus welcoming the children is familiar to most. While many services focus on listening and reading, some people need to be doing, moving and seeing. A traditional service may feel alien or difficult to sit through. How can we ensure that any who need a little extra support know that they belong as part of God's family too? A church could have designated people alert to welcome children or those with specific needs and could prepare welcome bags for them to use during worship.



What kind of bag? Any kind will do, but make them attractive and ensure they are kept in good condition. You could use children's rucksacks, box files, URC Children bags (Risk alert: small children must be supervised if using drawstring bags). You could make bags if someone in your congregation is keen on sewing –

maybe stitching a URC Children cloth badge onto the outside ([bit.ly/URCCYWmerch](http://bit.ly/URCCYWmerch)). Make sure the design is age appropriate.

## What's in the bag?

Half of the fun of putting these together is choosing the items yourselves, thinking about what works for your church setting. Also think about who the bag is for – they are particularly useful for children, people with additional needs (neurodivergent, attention deficit etc), people with dementia. Here are some ideas.

**Sensory items and fidget toys:** Fidget toys and sensory objects such as silicone popper toys and twisting snakes, coloured scarfs, pipe cleaners, smooth pebbles,



playdough, lavender bags, cuddly toy etc. Any playdough must be non-toxic and frequently replaced. Here is a great no-cook recipe for home-made playdough: [bit.ly/play\\_dough](https://bit.ly/play_dough)



A search bottle is a plastic bottle three-quarters filled with something like rice, sand or lentils, with items like a cross, a fish or a heart hidden in it and the lid securely fastened. For those who have limited movement or speech, large chunky items work best and items with smell or texture.

**Art and craft materials:** A small clipboard (A5 is fine) is useful to lean on or even just a board and some tape; paper, crayons (wax or pencil), with range of skin tones so anybody using them feels included; round-bladed scissors (depending on age), age appropriate colouring sheets, pencil sharpener, simple craft materials (you can buy some quite cheaply from Baker Ross), solid glue stick, wooden peg people, whiteboard and dry-wipe pens etc. Check these after every use and remove used or broken items, sharpen crayons and pencils etc.



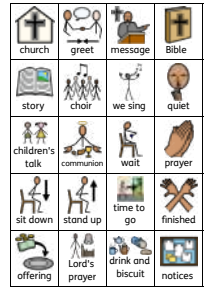
**Worship materials:** Small flags or on a stick to wave; maybe a gentle percussion instrument such as a shaker for use during hymns; URC Children prayer cards (available from [children.youth@urc.org.uk](mailto:children.youth@urc.org.uk) or print your own from [bit.ly/Child-prayer-cards](https://bit.ly/Child-prayer-cards)); communion

sets (get these from Etsy or make your own; LED battery candles; sermon notes sheet from: [bit.ly/URCCYWpaperwork](https://bit.ly/URCCYWpaperwork)

**Reading material:** An age-appropriate Bible or Bible story book (check these to make sure they reflect diversity and a theology that ties in with your church). Laminated story sheets can be better than books as they are less easy to damage! Symbols for different parts of the service ([bit.ly/WidgitWords](https://bit.ly/WidgitWords))

printed and laminated or made into an order of service. Laminated “I spy” sheets for the church with whiteboard markers.

**Snack:** You may wish to include a snack and/or a drink – [www.cartonwater.co.uk](http://www.cartonwater.co.uk) produce cartons of water with a long shelf life, which are more



environmentally friendly than single use plastic bottles. A small box of raisins is often a welcome treat (raisin allergies are very rare but do check first) or a small pack of plain rice cakes can be an allergen-free savoury snack. A small pack of tissues or wipes is also helpful.

## Involve your congregation

Not only might people have ideas and items they can contribute, but eager knitters might be able to knit characters and animals from Bible stories to include. A good way of giving everyone a sense of being part of the welcome.

## Check for safety and first impressions

Make sure everything is up to date, fresh and not damaged before every use. Ensure bags for small children do not contain small items that can be swallowed, clips that can trap fingers, or strings that can be caught around necks. Make sure any snacks are fresh and in date, discarding anything edible that has been handled.

## Have you considered the Children and Youth Friendly Church scheme?

[bit.ly/CYFCscheme](http://bit.ly/CYFCscheme)



[www.urc.org.uk](http://www.urc.org.uk)